

April 15, 2019

WHAT'S HAPPENING

A newsletter for the Maine Medical Center family

Maine Transplant Program Celebrates Living Kidney Donors



Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Maine), Maine Transplant Program director John Vella, MD, living donor coordinator Heather Stephen and donor Kristin Salway pose for a photo at the MTP Living Donor Celebration at The Portland Country Club on April 4.

been looking for ways to honor donors for some time, as the need for kidneys continues to be great.

There are 170 Maine residents waiting for a kidney transplant. The average wait for a kidney in the U.S. is three to five years, and the number of people needing healthy kidneys continues to far outpace the number of deceased donor kidneys available. Kidneys from living donors also last longer than deceased donor kidneys.

The Maine Transplant Program (MTP) hosted about 60 living kidney donors and their guests at The Portland Country Club on April 4 at

its first Living Donor Celebration. The event was a thank you to the everyday heroes who have given loved ones – and total

strangers – the gift of life.

The living donor coordinators and surgeons who have worked with donors have

*'Donate Life'
Continued on Back*

MMC Receives \$2.2M Federal Grant to Study Impact of Household Chemicals on Teen Obesity, Bone Density

Maine Medical Center (MMC) has received \$2.2 million from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) to study whether certain chemicals that are commonly found in household items may be contributing to obesity in teenagers, and potentially making those teens more susceptible to osteoporosis later in life.

The study looks at the impact of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and phthalates on about 500 teenagers who have been enrolled since birth in Project Viva, a longitudinal research study of mothers and children in Eastern Massachusetts. PFAS are synthetic chemicals added to clothing, furniture and carpets to make the items non-stick and stain repellant. Phthalates

are added to personal care products such as shampoos and lotions to retain scents. They're also used to improve flexibility in plastics. Studies in animals suggest that these classes of chemicals may disrupt common biological pathways to increase the risk of both high body fat and low bone mineral density.



Abby Fleisch, MD

*'MMC Grant'
Continued on Back*

'Donate Life' From Front

"Donors are unique and important people," said Ardyce Peters, director of Maine Transplant Services at MMC. "I continue to be humbled by these individuals who risk their own life for another person."

Among those attending was Kristin Salway, who donated her kidney last year to help the son of her co-worker. She said she appreciated the event as a way to connect with others who have shared this experience. "I didn't know anyone who's donated an organ before," Salway said. "It was wonderful to be able to make a connection to someone who had gone through what I did as a living donor."

Salway said she is very glad she was able to save a life

and has been active in encouraging others to donate their kidneys, too. Her husband, Paul, is hopeful that others will be inspired by her story.

"Donating an organ is more attainable than people realize," Paul Salway said. "It can seem overwhelming, but the Maine Transplant Program did a great job taking us through every step."

Congresswoman Chellie Pingree (D-Maine) addressed donors during the ceremony. She saw first-hand what a difference donors make when her daughter's friend, Jessie Hallowell, found herself in need of a kidney this year. Hallowell's brother, Sam, was able to save her life by donating his kidney.

"Many of us know little about kidney donation, and it's hard to understand just



3-5 YEARS: Average wait time for a kidney in the U.S.

BLOOD TYPE: How a kidney is matched with a recipient

2-3 DAYS: Average hospital stay after donating a kidney

15 HOURS: The average time a patient spends a week receiving dialysis treatment



RegisterMe.org

how major of a life decision it is until you've seen it up close," said Congresswoman Pingree. "Watching the Hallowell family this year has brought the issue close to home for me, and I'll continue to fight in Congress to pass legislation that will protect donors and re-

cipients. No one who donates a kidney should have their insurance denied or their premiums increased."

April is Donate Life Month. To begin the process to register as a living donor, visit mmc.org/living-donation.

'MMC Grant' From Front

"Adolescence is an important time when our bodies build up both bone and fat," said principal investigator Abby Fleisch, M.D., M.P.H., a pediatric endocrinologist at MMC, faculty scientist at the Maine Medical Center Research Institute and assistant professor

at Tufts University School of Medicine.

"Few human studies have looked at how these chemicals in our environment could be impacting our fat accumulation and the health of our bones."

The study will test for PFAS in samples of the teens' blood and for phthalates in their urine. Researchers also will meas-

ure body fat and bone density using a special kind of X-ray machine. Each child filled out food questionnaires that will help the research team investigate how much of the PFAS and phthalate exposure has come from diet and how much has come from the environment.

The study is being funded as part of the National

Institute of Environmental Health Sciences' Outstanding New Environmental Scientist (ONES) program. The ONES program was formed to cultivate future leaders in environmental health and support innovative research projects. The hope is that this research could lead to ways to curb obesity and osteoporosis later in life.



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